

Media Notes

Hot Off the Press: Editor Ben Bradlee's Memo

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By Howard Kurtz
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Benjamin Bradlee is about to reap a whirlwind of publicity for his new autobiography, beginning with a New Yorker profile this week and a Mike Wallace interview on "60 Minutes" Sunday.

The former Washington Post executive editor,

whose fame as a Kennedy intimate and Georgetown raconteur long ago transcended that of a mere journalist, serves up no startling revelations on such matters as Watergate. But Bradlee (now a Post Co. vice president) does offer a few tantalizing passages, some involving more than a half-dozen of his extramarital flings.

Among other things, Bradlee, 74, says in "A Good Life" that:

■ He felt "betrayed" by h
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behavior" that, if exposed, would have led to Kennedy's impeachment.

■ He was twice ignored by Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis after she told him she did not like his 1975 book on her late husband. One snubbing came at a party during the 1976 Democratic convention and another while on vacation at St. Maarten, when she refused to say hello.

■ The Post newsroom in 1965 was "racist. Overtly racist, in a few isolated cases; passively racist in many places where reporters and editors were insensitive and unsensitized." Bradlee, who initially hired only white males, says he "was not sensitive to racism or sexism. . . . I didn't know anything about blacks, or the black experience."

■ ABC News President Rooney Arledge once offered him the job of anchoring a new show called "20/20."

■ The Pulitzer Prizes are a deeply flawed process in which "the best entries don't win prizes more than half the time. . . . Members of the advisory board, largely publishers and editors of newspapers competing for the prizes, are deeply enmeshed in conflicts of interest. Votes are subtly, if not openly, traded between advisory board members."

■ Ernest K. Lindley, Newsweek's Washington bureau chief in the late 1950s, regularly received envelopes from the CIA containing items for the magazine's "Periscope" column. Lindley passed the envelopes on to Newsweek's New York headquarters but kept the \$5 paid by Newsweek to staffers who submitted items.

■ Howard Simons, the late Post managing editor, "never really got over his resentment" at feeling that his role in Watergate was "fatally shortchanged" in the film "All the President's Men." "Our relationship . . . was never the same after the film."

■ Pamela Harriman once sent over a mutual friend, Richard Holbrooke (now

an assistant secretary of state), and his then-girlfriend, Diane Sawyer, to argue that an unflattering story about Harriman should be killed. It ran anyway.

Excerpts from the book will be published in Sunday's Style section.